

Iron County Register

BY ELI D. AKE.
IRONTON, MISSOURI.

AT THE PASTURE BARS.

Returning home from the field
She met me at the pasture bars;
The moon was like a golden shield,
The firmament was lit with stars.

As morning dawn, her face was mild,
As evening, so her rapid eye;
God never gave a sweeter child
For weary man to idolize.

So winsome seemed her artless mirth,
Her soft curves, and ardent kiss;
I thought, of all delights on earth,
The angels surely covet this.

I know they mean to do me ill,
But whom they love they love away;
Good angels, love her as ye will,
But leave her with me while I stay.

Just as she is, for I would set
The hand of time behind an hour,
If that would stay a little yet
The bud from blooming to the flower.

And when at length we homeward went,
The fragrant azure shone so clear,
The great familiar firmament
I thought, had never seemed so near.

So near, the moon above the trees
An airy globe of silver swung,
And in the dewy tops of these
The stars in mellow clusters hung.

So near, that I could scarce forego
The thought of one so longing ways;
Might hear a whisper sweet and low
Across the golden-portal'd ways.

Washington Capital.

WALHALLA.

A few years ago a young English artist, named Reid, who was traveling through this country, stopped for a day or two at Louisville, having found an old friend there.

He urged this gentleman to go with him into the mountainous region of Tennessee and North Carolina.

"The foliage," he said, "will be worth study in September. I have seen it in England, and there for my brother. He is a house-decorator in London, and when he is in the Alps last summer, he was told that a wood-carver, whose work he saw in Bern, and fancied, had come to America two or three years ago, turned farmer and joined a small German colony in these mountains. I am to find this colony if I can, and if I find it, I will bring you a real skill in it, to offer him regular work and good wages in London. My brother is in immediate need of a panel-carver."

He could have imported a dozen from Bern.

"Certainly," said Reid, with a shrug; "but Tom has his whims. He fancied that he detected a delicacy, a softness in this man's work—an undiscovered flexibility, in fact. Pomeroy! Do you know any such colony?"

"No, and I hardly can believe that there are any thirty German artists among those impenetrable mountains. Why, access to many of the counties is only to be had on mules, and at the risk of your neck. Your German must have a market for his work; he would find none there."

They were talking in the breakfast room of the hotel. A man at the same table looked up and nodded.

"Beg pardon, but couldn't help overhearing. Think the place you want is in South Carolina. Name of Walhalla. Village. Queer little corner. 'O, thanks!' said Reid, eyeing him speculatively, as probably a new specimen of the American. 'Any Swiss there, do you know?'"

"That I can't tell you, sir," said the stranger, expanding suddenly into the geniality of an old acquaintance. "They're Germans, I take it. Shut out of the world by the mountains as completely as the monks of a hill of the dead, as they call it. There it is, with German houses and German customs, dropped down right into the midst of Carolina scrub-oaks and Georgia pines. I found the village five years ago, while I was buying up skins in the mountains. I'm a fur dealer, Cincinnati. One of my cards, gentlemen."

To Walhalla, therefore, Mr. Reid and his friend went. They tried to strike a bee-line to it, through a wilderness of mountain ranges, by trails only known to the hunters; but they found themselves lost in the thickets of the night. After two weeks of climbing among the clouds, of solitary communion with Nature, of ungratified desire for pork and peas, they came in sight of Walhalla.

They had reached Macon County, North Carolina, where the Appalachian range, which stretches like a blue-belted giant across the coast of the continent, closes abruptly in walls of rock, jutting like mighty promontories into the plains of Georgia and South Carolina.

Reid and Pomeroy stopped at a small inn on one of these heights to water their mules at a spring, from which two streams bubbled through the grass and separated, one to flow into the Atlantic and the other into the Gulf of Mexico, so narrow and steep was the ridge on which they stood. The wind blew thin and cold in their faces; the sun shone brightly about them; but there was no warmth in the clouds were driven, eddying like waves, out toward the horizon. Far down in the valley a rain-storm was raging. It occupied but small space and looked like a smoke of steam, gray fog, torn times by yellow, jagged lightning.

Not far from the spring a brown mare was tethered, and near it a saddle horse, a blue horseman was lying stretched lazily on the dry, ash-colored moss, his chin in his palms, watching the storm in the valley. An empty sack had served as a saddle for the horse, and a horn. He was evidently a farmer, who had come up into the mountains to salt his wild cattle.

Reid took note of the clean jacket, the steady blue eyes, the red rose in his cap.

"Swiss," he said to Pomeroy. "Where is Walhalla, my friend?"

The man touched his cap, and pointed to a wisp of smoke at the base of the mountain. As they rode on, his dog snuffed curiously at their horses' heels, but Hans did not raise his head to look after them.

"That is the first man I have seen in America," said Reid, "who took time to look at the world he lived in."

When they were gone, Hans lay watching the cloud below soften from a metallic black mass into pearly haze; then it drifted up into films across the green hills. On the nearer plain below, he now saw the blue-bellied cotton-woods, wet and shining after the shower; threads of mist full of rainbow lights traced out the water courses; daisy, early scents came up to the height from the soaked forests. After a long while he rose leisurely, his eyes filled with satisfaction, as one who has had a good visit in the home of a friend. He mounted the mare and rode down the trail; the sun shone ruddily on the peaks above him, but there was a damp, shivering twilight in the gorges. Both seemed looking toward the young fellow; his mare whinnied when he patted her neck; the dog ran, barking and jumping upon him; it was a conversation that had been going on for years among old friends.

Mr. Reid reached Walhalla at dusk, and found down. As his mare went slowly down the wide street, he looked from side to side with pleased surprise.

"It is a street out of some German village," he said. "I have not seen such thrift or homely comfort in this country."

"It is only the sudden contrast to the grandeur and dirt below us," said Pomeroy. "If you miss the repose and exaltation of the lofty heights which you talked of, you will find scrubbed floors and flea-beds a solid consolation."

The sleepy hamlet consisted of but one broad street, lined by quaint wooden houses, their steep roofs covered with grape-vines or roses. Back of these houses stretched trim gardens, gay with dahlias and yellow wall-flowers; back of these, again, were the farms. Along the middle of the street, at intervals were shaded wells, public saloons, a platform for town meetings. The people were gathered about one of the wells, in their old German fashion, the men with their pipes, the women with their knitting.

Reid remained in Walhalla for two or three days. He found that there were several Swiss families and that many of the men had been wood-carvers at home. He hit upon a plan

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One day he left the village collected about the well to talk the matter over. Here was a strange gust from the outer world blowing into their dead claim! Most of them had forgotten that there was a world outside of Walhalla. They tilted their farms and bartered with the mountaineers. Twice a year Schopf went to Charlotte for goods to fill his drowsy shop. London! Riches! Fame! The blast of a strange future, truly. The blood began to quicken. Such of them as had been wood-carvers felt their fingers itch for the knife.

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"If Hans had but his wit now!" said one, nodding as Hans came down the street. "Hans is a good fellow. But he will never make a stir in the world. Now George's fingers used to be as nimble as his tongue."

Heller's tongue, meanwhile, was wagging merrily enough at the other side of the well. He was a little, wiry, red-haired, spectacled fellow, with a perpetual movement and sparkle about him, and the boys thrust their heads in to hear him. "That's the right sort of talk. Fame—profit! Why should we always drag behind the world here at Walhalla? Plow and dig, and dig! The richest man in New York left Germany a butcher's son, with his wallet strapped on his back; and what is he now? A Londoner! Just give me a foothold in London and I'll show you what a baker's son can do. Let Hans Becht laugh as he chooses!" For Hans, who had come down to the well, was listening with a quizzical twinkle in his eye.

He filled his pipe, launched sat down and said nothing. Everybody knew Hans to be the most silent man in Walhalla.

The pretty girls gathered shyly closer to Heller, and the boys thrust their heads in to hear him. They stared admiringly up at him. Hans was their special friend, but what a stout, common-place creature he was beside this brilliant fellow!

"A man only needs a foothold in this world!" George said, adjusting his spectacles and looking nervously toward a bench where a young girl sat, holding her baby brother. The child was a solid lump of flesh, but she looked down at the tenderest eyes in the world. The sight of her drove the blood through Heller's veins almost as surely as the mere sight of a glass of liquor would do. "O, if I win, I'll take a wife from Walhalla!" he cried, laughing excitedly, looking at her and not caring for the whole village saw his look.

"Come back for the girl I love!" He fancied that the shy eyes had caught the fire from his own and answered with a sudden flash.

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"Success—money—money!" Hans looked anxiously down into her face. "They are good things," she said, "very good things."

Hans's tongue was tied as usual. He dropped Phil in the cradle in the kitchen, and then came out and led Christine down to the garden of his own house.

What was London—money, to home? Surely she must see that! He fed her slowly past the well-built barn and pigsties, past the beehives hidden behind the cherry-trees, and seated her on the porch. He thought these things would speak for him. Hans clung as closely to his home as Phil clung to his mother's breast. But Christine looked sullen.

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At that instant from the train came a frightful shriek—women's voices. The passengers were hurrying to the door. It was but a moment, yet it seemed like an hour. The train did not abate its speed. The man, a short fellow of powerful build, thrust the strength of a giant into his straining muscles; his white face with its distorted eyes was close in front in the red glare of the engine.

Hurst shut his eyes. He muttered something about Joe was his little boy. The train jarred with a long scurrying rasp, and—stopped. They were saved.

"Great God!" prayed Hurst. "Tight squeak for your life, Zack!" he said aloud, wetting his lips with his tongue.

The people poured out of the train. They went up to the car, some laughing, some swearing. But every man there felt as if Death had taken his soul into his hold for a moment, and then let it go.

Three stout men tried to move the car. They could not do it.

"Who is that fellow?"

"A workman on the road?"

"No," said Hurst.

"Who is he?" asked several.

For he had vanished as if the earth had swallowed him up.

"He was a youngling, light complexioned fellow," said Hurst. "Most likely a Deutscher from Walhalla."

"Whoever he may be, he saved our lives," said a director of the road. "I never saw such desperate courage. I vote for a testimonial."

The American soul exults in testimonials, and the Southerner is free with his money. Millions of the great and the good of New York merchants on board, who valued their lives at a pretty figure. More than all, there was a widow from California, the owner of millions and of the pretty boy who had looked out of the window. "He saved my baby," she said with a sob, as she took the package.

The testimonial grew suddenly into a sum which made Hurst wink with amazement when he heard of it. "That fellow will be king in Walhalla," he said.

It was near morning when Hans came home. He went to his room, said his prayers, and slept heavily. The next morning the village was on fire with excitement. The train was full of passengers from the train; the story was in everybody's mouth. The director of the road had driven over from the station. When Hans was told of the testimonial, he was so dumbfounded that he could not speak.

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